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Remembering Luke Hotte, Middlebury's beloved throws coach

COURTESY PHOTO/ MARTIN BEATTY

Luke Hotte coached throws for the Middlebury track and field team for 40 years.

By TING CUI
Senior Sports Editor

Lucien "Luke" J. Hotte Jr., assistant coach and cornerstone of Middlebury College's track and field program for nearly four decades, passed away on Feb. 10, 2024, at the age of 77.

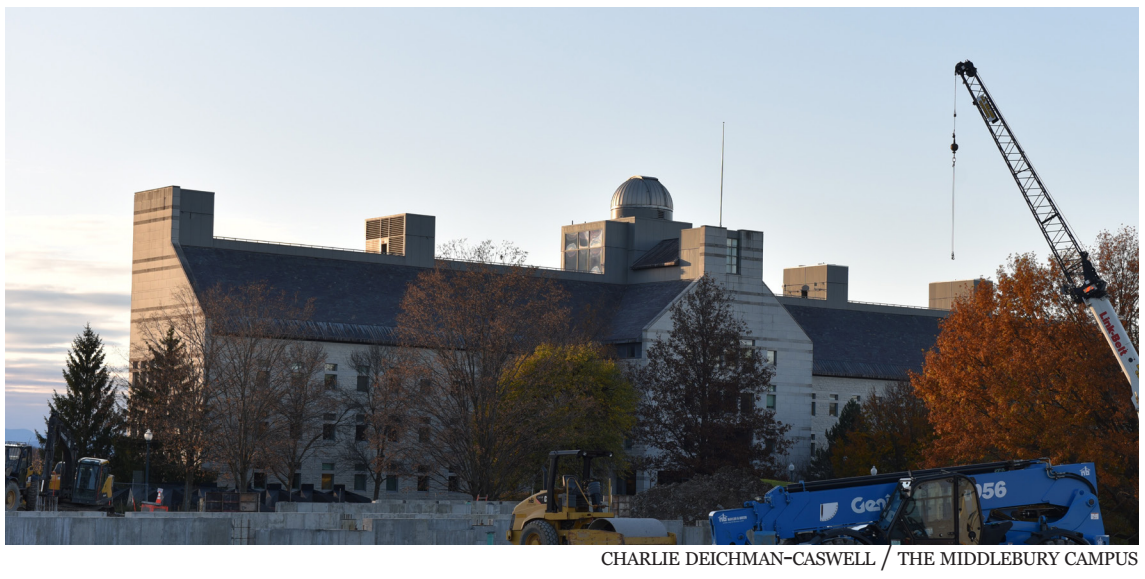
"He was such a valued and treasured member of our coaching staff," reflected Middlebury track and field's Head Coach Martin Beatty '84. "[He was] the best throws coach in this part of the country."

Hotte's legacy extends far beyond his achievements as a coach, having transformed countless of his athletes' lives through his dedication to both athletics and personal development.

Born in Middlebury and raised on his family's century-old dairy farm in Bridport, Vt.,

Continued on Page 11

FEDERAL BUDGET CUTS ENDANGER OVER $6 MILLION IN COLLEGE'S RESEARCH GRANTS



CHARLIE DEICHMAN-CASWELL / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

A $530,000 Inclusive Excellence Grant from HHMI, which previously funded student biomedical research in faculty labs housed in BiHall, was recently cut off by President Trump's executive order targeting DEI programs.

By RYAN MCELROY
Editor in Chief

Executive orders, looming budget cuts and other changes to major federal agencies by the Trump administration pose a serious threat to over $6 million in scientific research funding at Middlebury this spring. Hundreds of thousands in grants have already been lost, prompting faculty to worry that their ongoing projects will be impacted next.

Two weeks ago the college lost a $530,000 Inclusive Excellence Grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) after Trump's executive order targeted Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs. The grant was in its third year of funding as part of a now-defunct $60 million initiative from the nation's largest private funder of biomedical research, which cut off this funding to over 100 colleges and universities on Feb. 5.

Associate Dean of the Sciences Rick Bunt, who ran the HHMI grant for Middlebury, shared that the grant previously supported student research in faculty labs, additional teaching assistants for STEM courses and professional development for faculty. There is still enough money to continue some programs into next fall, but no future funding allocations will be made to continue beyond then.

"That's a pretty big loss for us — about $260k funding over [the] next three years that we won't get to use to improve our introductory STEM curricula," Bunt wrote in an email to The Campus.

The college maintained that it would continue research activities as usual this spring, despite faculty concerns over the potential for sweeping cuts following a since-rescinded White House memo that froze all federal grants and loans on Jan. 27.

"We are tracking and evaluating the executive orders and related lawsuits to assess how they might affect operations, activities, and research efforts and funding as a whole," a college spokesperson wrote in a statement to The Campus. "Until we know the specific impacts, we are proceeding with our research mission as usual."

The HHMI grant is the only federal funding allocation to the college that has been permanently rescinded or canceled so far, according to Dean of the Faculty Jim Ralph.

The recent executive order banning all references to DEI has also had an outsized impact on federal funding grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF), faculty said, because such disbursements often include references to diversity and inclusion.

"Many grants do have that kind of wording in there, and it was even an expected part of the grant application process. So this is a dramatic change in policy," Professor of Biology Mark

Continued on Page 2

Graduation speakers draw online backlash for pro-Palestinian speeches

By MAGGIE BRYAN
Senior News Editor

At this year's February Celebration Ceremony, student speaker Faith Wood '24.5 veered off of their pre-approved script, denouncing Middlebury's alleged complicity in the war in Gaza and encouraging audience members to withhold their donations from the institution. Wood's speech followed last spring's commencement speech by Adayliah Ley '24, which also criticized the college's investments in what Middlebury Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) has called war profiteering.

Both speeches have garnered backlash within the Middlebury community and online, prompting the college to reconsider how the May graduation speeches will take place.

Wood began their speech on a sentimental note, drawing from memories of the graduating class's first days on campus during the pandemic. In the third minute of the speech, their tone pivoted, emphasizing that although the day was a celebration for some, the audience must not forget the tragedies that have taken place on campus and in the world during the past four years.

Continued on Page 3

ORGANIZERS GATHER IN MIDDLEBURY TO SUPPORT NATIONWIDE "NOT MY PRESIDENTS DAY"

By MANDY BERGHELA
Senior Local Editor

On Monday, Feb. 17 demonstrators across all 50 states rallied for a National Day of Protest under the banner of what organizers from the grassroots movement 50501 called "Not My Presidents Day". Middlebury's local protest drew 150 people at the Court Square Upper Green and was organized by Indivisible/Middlebury, a chapter of the broader Indivisible movement that formed in response to President Trump's first term.

The 50501 movement, named for its goal of organizing 50 protests in 50 states in one day, began on Reddit as a decentralized effort against the "anti-democratic and illegal actions of the Trump administration and its pluralistic allies," according to its website. 50501 is not affiliated with any political party, but rather claims to be a peaceful "call to action" that does not tolerate violence. It quickly gained momentum, with local activists coordinating rallies in state capitals and towns across the U.S. The Feb. 5 protest also saw hundreds gather in Montpelier, Vt., with over 80 protests across all 50 states.

For many demonstrators who braved the wind chills as low as zero degrees Fahrenheit, Monday's protest was about more than just resisting the Trump administration — it was about defending democracy itself.

"Democracies die by the indifference of their citizens," wrote Jack Mayer, a retired pediatrician, longtime activist and affiliate with Indivisible/Middlebury, in an email to The Campus. "Along with protests all over the country on President's Day, Indivisible is standing up to this abuse of power and serving notice to Trump and his minions that we will fight to defeat his right-wing takeover of the American government and rebuild our inclusive democracy."

Indivisible is a national organization which was founded in 2016 by two graduates from Carleton College, Leah Greenberg and Ezra Levin, with around 3,200 original chapters. Today, there are around 10,000 chapters, with more than one

Continued on Page 4

WINTER CARNIVAL ICE SHOW DAZZLES SPECTATORS, HONORS FIGURE SKATER VICTIMS OF TRAGIC PLANE CRASH

STEVE JAMES / ADDISON INDEPENDENT

Team U.S.A Figure Skaters Ting Cui '25.5 and Emmanuel Savary skated a duet to "Saturn" in honor of the 28 members of the figure skating community and their family members that passed away in the tragic plane crash in January.

By MADELEINE KAPTEIN
Managing Editor

After watching the Winter Carnival Ice Show this past weekend, every song feels like it deserves a spin, sparkles take on a new meaning and the possibilities of two blades on ice feel endless. In two stunning shows on Saturday and Sunday afternoon, college and local figure skaters' impressive maneuvers and theatrics dazzled the audiences that filled the Kenyon Ice Arena.

The special collaboration between town and gown to put on this love-themed event was clear from the opening number, when both members

Continued on Page 8

NEWS

Students show school spirit at Winter Carnival
By NOAH WILLSON

Ranyely Gil Rojas '28 wins eighth annual Spencer Prize
By RACHELLE TALBERT

▸ PAGE 2

LOCAL

New housing project Stonecrop Meadows launches construction
By VIOLET WEXLER

Bread Loaf Mountain Zen Community to consolidate locations
By ELLA CALLAHAN

▸ PAGE 4

OPINIONS

Tolerance and forbearance in hosting outside speakers
By SARAH STROUP

What should Winter Carnival mean to Middlebury?
By THE EDITORIAL BOARD

▸ PAGE 6

ARTS & CULTURE

A & C it for yourself: spring arts preview
By ELLIE TRINKLE

Raina Matar's "SHE" explores women's resilience with photography
By MAYA ALEXANDER

▸ PAGE 8

SPORTS

Panthers take on Williams during Senior Day
By WERONIKA WOZNY

Women's swimming and diving places fifth at NESCAC Championship
By BROOKE FRIBERG

▸ PAGE 11

STUDENTS SHOW SCHOOL SPIRIT AT WINTER CARNIVAL AND CELEBRATE SKI TEAM'S HISTORIC SUCCESS

NOAH WILLSON / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Students gathered at the Snow Bowl on Saturday to watch the NCAA ski races.

STEVE JAMES / ADDISON INDEPENDENT

Middlebury's Mika-Anne Reha '25 took part in the NCAA women's slalom a the Snowbowl on Friday.

By NOAH WILLSON
Contributing Writer

Middlebury Winter Carnival returned for its 102nd iteration this weekend, showcasing historic athletic achievements and a packed lineup of on-campus events. A triumphant showing from the Panthers led to their best carnival result in six years, totaling 877.5 points and finishing with a team result of second place. Back on campus, students participated in a range of activities, including an ice-carving competition, a film festival, bonfire, two performances of the Winter Carnival Ice Show and the traditional Winter Carnival Ball.

The flagship events of the carnival kicked off on Friday, with the slalom race at the Snowbowl and 1.4k sprint at Rikert Nordic Center. Beneath blue skies, Brad Underhill '25 clinched the slalom win and Nick Unkovskoy '27 strung together two impressive days, tying for 9th on Friday and taking second on Saturday.

"I was pumped for our team," Underhill said. "We put up a good fight and almost won the carnival over Dartmouth."

Kjersti Moritz '28 earned second place in the women's slalom competition, only 0.12 seconds behind the winner. Other notable performances from Sophia Tozzi '26 and Mika Anne Riha '25 led to three finishers in the top 10.

At Rikert, the men's and women's nordic teams logged strong results, finishing second place as a combined team for the day. The women's team landed four skiers in the top 10, with Maggie Wagner '26 leading the charge in fourth place. On the men's side, Jack Christner '25 finished in fourth position, narrowly missing the podium by 0.18 seconds. The momentum from Friday's competitions gave the Panthers motivation and fired them up for future success on Saturday.

As the sun set on the day's competitions, the fun resumed on campus. On Ross Lawn, a large bonfire roared to life, and students took turns roasting marshmallows, which Co-President of Middlebury College Activities Board (MCAB) Kanon Asari '27 appreciated.

"It was great to see people gathering and enjoying the fire in the snow," she said.

To top off the evening, eight teams of four or five students competed head-to-head in an ice sculpture contest on Proctor patio. Chipping away at suitcase-sized blocks of ice, the teams unleashed their creativity, shaping unique carvings using only hand tools. Notable sculptures included a penguin, a LOVE sculpture, an ice cream cone and an Easter Island Moai. Upping the ante, the cash prize was raised to $600 from $500 the year before. After voting concluded, the lifelike penguin sculpture came out on top.

On the morning of Saturday, Feb. 15, hundreds of students made the time-honored pilgrimage to the Snowbowl and Rikert to watch their fellow students compete. Amid overcast skies and chilling temperatures, hordes of brightly clothed fans packed the venues, creating a lively atmosphere.

The Snowbowl's DJs, food truck and hourly bus rides to and from the mountain provided a spirited backdrop for Saturday's competitions.

Ski patroller Abe Barrow '26 reflected on the previous year's events, and how they compared to this year's rather uneventful proceedings.

"The chaos of everybody sliding down the hill was kind of nuts," Barrow said, referring to Ski Patrol's struggles to manage drunk students who had climbed up the mountain.

Instead of allowing students on the upper area of the Snowbowl, mountain operations limited viewing to a smaller corral near the finish arena. Despite this change, Barrow said that all attendees seemed to enjoy the event.

For Underhill, and the team as a whole, the day was a dream come true. Underhill and Moritz displayed dominant form, leading the Panthers to wins in the men's and women's alpine competitions. He attributed the team's success in part to the incredible fan base at the mountain.

"It's just pretty next-level racing in front of a home crowd," Underhill said following his pair of wins. "I think everyone else on the circuit also really enjoys the atmosphere and the energy."

At Rikert, the scene was equally electric. Strong efforts from Jack Christner and Logan Moore earned them podium finishes in their final Middlebury carnival, an emotional outcome for the seniors.

Winter sports are at the heart of the Winter Carnival — but the races are only one part of a larger event. The weekend was packed with a host of other activities, which were fully organized by students.

On Thursday Feb. 13, the all-female adventure film festival No Man's Land Film Festival screened in Dana Auditorium. The festival showcased a number of films, an intermission panel and a raffle at the end.

As snow began to fall on Saturday night, the Winter Ball began in Nelson Arena. A Carnival tradition since 1923, this year's ball was well attended, with couples and friends enjoying mocktails, a photo booth and a DJ.

"We focused on marketing this year to make people excited for the Ball," Asari said. "Every board member worked so hard to make the event successful."

Engagement was high from both an athletic and student perspective. With the alpine and nordic races away next year, students and athletes alike left the weekend feeling fulfilled and excited for festivities to resume next year.

Federal budget cuts endanger over $6 million in college's research grants

Continued from Page 1

Spritzer told The Campus.

As of Feb. 10, Middlebury has at least 17 active grants based in Vermont provided by the National Science Foundation (NSF) that total over $4.9 million in scientific research funding, according to the organization's online database.

The college also has three ongoing grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which provides $1,133,900 in total to those projects, according to the agency's website.

Associate Professor of Environmental Studies Mez Baker-Médard said that her NSF-funded research, which focuses on social and ecological interactions in marine environments, has not been paused. Still, the recent cascade of executive orders targeting higher education has worried her about the future of scientific research.

"This new climate has cast a chilling shadow over any research that could be seen as supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion," Baker-Médard wrote in an email to The Campus. She added that her and other scientists' research "is now caught in the crosshairs of this deeply misguided and anti-intellectual assault."

Spritzer said that while his research on age-related memory loss has not been cut off from its NIH funding, his project may be targeted by future executive orders. The tenured biology professor added that the largest impact of potential cuts would be for non-tenured faculty, whose job security can depend on research projects and subsequent publications that are often funded through federal grants.

"I think the big picture is that this has created a great deal of uncertainty among anyone who is a scientist," Spritzer said. "I'd say that for the professors that are just trying to get started, it's probably the most scary right now."

Another recent executive order cut the indirect cost rate — which covers expenses such as support staff salaries, building maintenance and other costs not directly tied to scientific work — to just 15%. The Department of Health and Human Services and NIH previously negotiated the rate in order to determine how much the government would fund overhead costs.

The college's indirect cost rate is 61% of salaries and wages as of June 28, 2023, according to the college website. The average college indirect cost rate is between 27% and 28%, according to the NIH.

On Feb. 10, Vermont and 21 other states sued the federal government over these cuts to the NIH's indirect cost rates, and they received a temporary reprieve later that day. The state currently has 128 NIH-funded projects, totaling $84,668,147 for colleges, universities and several medical companies. A full hearing on the suit is set for Feb. 21, according to The New York Times.

Despite these drastic changes, the college stated it did not anticipate that the Grants and Sponsored Programs Office would be significantly impacted by the pending legal challenges.

"We continue to move forward with the essential work of Middlebury, working directly with those who are most affected while abiding by the law," a college spokesperson wrote.

Despite the recent turmoil, the college has worked to maintain its ability to provide students with a quality education, according to Spritzer. However, there may be a limit to how much Middlebury can cover as federal cuts and freezes continue to accumulate.

"[Middlebury] has provided a great deal of reassurance," he said. "But the reality is the holes that would be created by cutting federal grants, students would feel that. The college just can't fund everything."

RAYNLEY GIL ROJAS '28 WINS EIGHTH ANNUAL SPENCER PRIZE FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

COURTESY PHOTO / TODD BALFOUR

Raynley Gil Rojas '28 was the winner of this year's Spencer Prize.

By RACHELLE TALBERT
Copy Editor

On the evening of Jan. 28, the eighth annual Spencer Prize speech competition came to a close with its 2025 Grand Championship. Among an audience filled with friends, peers and former speakers, Ranyely Gil Rojas '28 was declared the Grand Champion. Her speech centered around the beauty standards that she has faced as a black woman and her journey towards embracing herself.

"My hair has always told two stories: what it should have been, versus what was actually there. My mom would forcefully tug, as if she could contain the war that my hair was fighting, certain that the shackles of this inherited hatred were unbreakable," Gil Rojas said in her speech.

This event — organized by the public speaking program Oratory Now — was both a culmination of the six finalists' oratorical skills and a vibrant expression of the first year community.

Nominated by a Middlebury faculty or staff member in the fall, each first year speaker was tasked with writing a three-minute speech in response to the prompt: "Connect something you've discovered in a Middlebury class to something you care about. Can you get your audience to care too?"

Although the competition centered around a monetary prize, with each finalist receiving $100 and the winner receiving $500, the goal of the Spencer Prize competition is to connect passionate students to one another. In addition to recognizing students for their skill, Associate Director of Oratory Now Ben Powers aims for an event that celebrates student achievement and fosters a strong community.

"We spend a good bit of time figuring out how we could create something that would have the motivation and the drive with a competitive aspect, like help students to really do their best, and want to excel and have that community-oriented feel," Powers said.

The event started with a social mixer, when speakers connected over their passions for speech. Many emphasized how meaningful it was to have built friendships with their peers encouraging them from the audience.

"Looking back, walking out from the dressing room and seeing a large portion of my teammates sitting there with a smile on their faces meant so much to me," Reed Hyde '28, a Spencer Prize finalist, wrote in an email to The Campus.

In Hyde's speech, he spoke of his internal conflict of wanting to express authenticity while limited by social expectations, citing struggles with his baseball team and presenting a childhood doll to his acting course. He received overwhelming acceptance as a result of his vulnerability — an experience many Spencer Prize speakers had throughout the competition.

Annalise Houghton '28 expressed a similar sentiment. To Houghton, the competition was about having the opportunity to share her passions with the support of a small community that encouraged everyone to do their best.

"It was originally a little daunting — I almost turned around when I saw the candlelit trail for the Social Mixer — but I felt so excited and supported throughout the entire process," Houghton wrote in an email to The Campus.

Juan Salazar '27 and Weronica Wonzy '27, both finalists in 2024, served as executive co-producers this year, leading a team of 32 students in various roles. Each worked to fine-tune the event to make it as meaningful for speakers as when they competed last year.

"It's not a three-person job, it's a whole team effort. So every single person on that production team, if I could highlight them with golden letters, with beautiful writing, I would, because every single person brought a lot to the table, from the MCs to the DJs to the people being set up, to the greeters — everybody brought something to the table," Wonzy said.

In regards to the academic aspect of the Spencer Prize, speakers dug deep, managing to describe their diverse interests and passions in a three-minute speech. Finalist Lily Jensen '28 said her routine walking route to the Knoll inspired the subject of her speech: how literature changes our perspective on the beauty of the world. Many others described the introspective nature of their unique creative processes.

"The process of writing the speech was very evocative — it forced me to think deeper about my learning here at Middlebury, and in that I saw the true value of the classes we take, namely in my case foreign language classes," Steph Snyder '28 wrote in an email to The Campus. She was a finalist who spoke about using her Italian classes to connect with her grandparents.

"I think it's a beautiful celebration of the Middlebury community, of the legacy that it has in a very creative and informative way," Wonzy said.

Graduation speakers draw backlash for pro-Palestinian speeches

COURTESY PHOTO / MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

Faith Wood criticized Middlebury College for its alleged complicity in the war in Gaza.

COURTESY PHOTO/ MIDDLEBURY STUDENTS FOR JUSTICE IN PALESTINE

Feb graduate protestors at the Snowbowl held signs displaying the names of universities in Gaza that Isreal has destroyed in the war.

Continued from Page 1

"Not all of us have the privilege to pretend that graduation could be a celebration. The deaths of three students within our four years and all of the other sinister ways that Middlebury fails its students make this sobering truth abundantly clear. If there's anything you hear of what I'm saying, let it be this: When our hearts break, let them break open like pomegranates and burst with seeds that take root," Wood said.

This portion of the speech was posted by X and Instagram by user Eyal Yakoby and reposted by thousands of others who have critiqued Wood's "woke" rhetoric. The post on X received over 1.5 million views, with the Instagram post receiving thousands of likes.

"Wokeism is a mental illness," wrote Yakoby, who once attended Middlebury before transferring to the University of Pennsylvania.

A torrent of online criticism followed his posts, with other users criticizing the decision to invoke the war in Gaza at a graduation ceremony and portraying the incident as a symptom of broader national politicization of higher education.

Middlebury is not the only school where commencement ceremonies have included protests or off-script speeches in the past year. Other universities have canceled student speeches and made efforts to bar student protestors from commencement ceremonies. With May commencement almost three months away, Ruzicka said that the administration has begun considering new protocols for student commencement speeches, to prevent similar speeches in the future.

"We intend to discuss this issue with the graduating class organization that partners with the administration on commencement and are considering ways to address the problem in the future. We are currently exploring some different options for the speakers for May commencement," Ruzicka wrote in an email to The Campus.

In addition to receiving backlash for their viewpoints, Wood and Ley's speeches have raised questions about the future of Middlebury's student speaker tradition. According to remarks from Interim President Stephen Snyder at the February Celebration, a committee of seniors in discussions facilitated by various administrators has been charged with selecting a representative to speak at Commencement since 2001.

Ruzicka detailed this process in an email to The Campus, explaining that the speakers are selected based on a final draft of their speech, which they submit in writing and/or video to the committee. According to Ruzicka, both Wood and Ley's speeches at the ceremonies were different from those they submitted to the committee.

"For two commencement ceremonies, now, the speakers without informing us in advance have changed their speeches between the time they were selected and the time they stood on the podium," Ruzicka wrote.

Ruzicka also told The Campus that audience members at both commencement ceremonies found the speeches to be offensive.

When asked what they would say to those who disapproved of their speech, Wood encouraged them to interrogate the root of their discomfort.

"If hearing me say what's happening around the world and at this College is triggering to you, why don't you use that upset to change what's happening around the world and at this College, so the truth doesn't make you so uncomfortable anymore?" Wood wrote in an email to The Campus.

Ley also received online backlash after her spring commencement speech but emphasized the importance of standing up for something she believes in.

"The response I received online was scary knowing that a lot of my personal information was available for anyone to access, but it was a risk I was willing to take," Ley wrote in an email to The Campus.

Ley and Wood both expressed to The Campus that it would have felt wrong not to address the suffering occurring on campus and abroad in their speeches.

"I know that many people think that commencement is not the time and place to say the things that Faith and I said. I disagree... It would've felt wrong to leave Middlebury without acknowledging the good and the bad of my experience as well as what was going on in the lives of people across the world," Ley wrote.

According to Wood, they asked everyone they interacted with in the weeks leading up to commencement what they wanted to hear at the ceremony.

"What I found is that the people I spoke to were not interested in hearing more bureaucratic, shallow congratulations. They wanted acknowledgement of all of it: of all they gained and all they lost in the role of 'Middlebury College student,'" Wood wrote.

New housing project Stonecrop Meadows launches construction in Middlebury

By VIOLET WEXLER
Contributing Writer

COURTESY PHOTO / STEVE JAMES
Groundbreaking on the site of Stonecrop Meadows, demonstrated by local and state politicians, developers, and Middlebury College officials.

On Monday, Feb. 3, Stonecrop Meadows broke ground, marking the inception of a significant construction project intended to address the housing crisis in Addison County and Vermont at large. The building will add 254 new homes to the town, providing more affordable and livable options for individuals and families who work at the college in addition to other local residents.

These homes will be built on a 35-acre property located just outside downtown Middlebury, and the first homes in development will be available to the public in the summer of 2025.

The project was initially conceived as a solution to the recurring housing problem for professors. Staff are also an important reason for college investment in new housing developments: Under 40% of Middlebury staff live in town, while over 20% of employees live more than 15 miles away from campus.

"Right now, it's a real challenge for us when we attract a tenured track faculty member. One of our biggest challenges, they're like, 'I wanna come to Middlebury. I love my offer. I can't find a place to live'," said David Provost, executive vice president of Finance and Administration for Middlebury College.

Provost collaborated with Zeke Davisson, chief operating officer at Summit Properties, to address this issue with former Middlebury president Laurie Patton.

"Middlebury College's role is that of the largest employer in Addison County. So, I said to Laurie and our board, 'Look, we can't sit idly and hope someone else will fix this'," Provost told The Campus.

During the permitting process, Davisson spoke with Middlebury community members to gather public feedback, which helped shape the project.

"Summit did such a good job of holding public meetings even before they enter the permitting process, so I felt like the public was really aware of it," said Jennifer Murray, the town of Middlebury's director of Planning and Zoning. "Anyone who had comments pretty much got their comments out."

Another concern for the developers of the project was the impact of 254 new homes on Middlebury's existing infrastructure. The town's Development Review Board, a seven-member board responsible for administrative appeals and reviews of development proposals, was tasked with identifying any infrastructure issues that may emerge from the project. The board performed a traffic study, reviewed the stormwater plan, updated the water line and extended the sidewalk across from the development to ensure that children living in that area could still safely walk to school.

Additionally, a separate development agreement was created outside the review board's process to outline necessary infrastructure upgrades and their funding. The town and Summit Properties will share the costs, with an agreement specifying the logistics of those expenses.

The project aims to create not only more homes in Middlebury but also more affordable homes, according to Provost.

"The market rate is really what's going to qualify for our faculty, and we're trying to work on tools to make that more affordable for our faculty, either through a second mortgage program or, enhancing other programs," Provost said."I think this project will also free up housing stock. As people start to move to Stonecrop, that will free up other units. But that's just a start."

The project has the potential not only to add significantly more homes to Middlebury but also to create a more vibrant town, more jobs, more childcare and increase enrollment in local schools. Provost expects that the project will also allow Middlebury graduates who want to stay in Vermont, specifically Middlebury, to access more job opportunities in the area.

This housing shortage is not unique to Middlebury but is a statewide issue.

"We estimate that we need to add 40,000 housing units across the state in the next five to 10 years. And if we don't, we'll continue to have this problem," Provost said.

For Gov. Scott, Sen. Peter Welch and the various Summit Properties and college officials who broke ground on the site this month, Stonecrop Meadows is the first step in the solution to this problem.

"I think there are lessons to be learned here," Murray said. "This could be a model project that they could replicate in this community and other communities in terms of the collaborative approach and just the funding concept."

Organizers gather in Middlebury supporting nationwide "Not My Presidents Day"

Continued from Page 1

million members across the country.

The Middlebury chapter was established in 2017 as part of a broader movement to resist authoritarianism and defend democratic values. The organization has rapidly grown, with attendance at their meetings surging from just nine members in December to over 70 at their most recent gathering on Feb. 11.

"We are organizing for change and the very survival of our democracy and the world order," Mayer wrote. "With that in mind we will say NO! to Project 2025. We will build coalitions to drive a national effort to retake the House and Senate in 2026 elections. We will play hardball pushing back on the Trump agenda and heartless MAGA attacks on vulnerable populations, such as women, migrants, LGBTQ+, BIPOC, and other communities who will be under attack."

At the rally, Protesters carried signs with messages such as "Love, not hate, makes America great," "Resist fascism" and variations emphasizing "Democracy, not dictatorship" and "Presidents day, not Kings day."

Each of the protesters had their own reason to be there and felt personally motivated to show up to the protests.

"I'm deeply concerned by a number of actions by the Trump administration, from eliminating congressionally funded government agencies without the authority to do so, to using the justice department for nakedly political purposes, to threatening to defy court orders and the rule of law, to undermining the independence of the press," Professor of Philosophy John Spackman wrote to The Campus in an email. "These protests are an opportunity for people to make their voices heard, which is especially crucial if the courts do not provide an effective corrective on their own."

Indivisible/Middlebury organizer Dorothy Mammen agreed with his characterization of the protest.

"The National Day of Protest is to bring visibility and give voice to the level of concern people are feeling and to continue to build a movement to take action and restore democracy," Mammen told The Campus.

The demonstration in Middlebury was one of the smaller rallies held across the country, with larger turnouts in major cities across the U.S., and also in neighboring cities in Vermont such as Burlington and at the state capitol in Montpelier.

There were no set speakers at the protest, but many cars honked and waved in support.

With uncertainty about what the future holds, one thing remains clear: For those who took to the streets on this National Day of Protest, the fight for democracy is far from over.

"Silence is complicity and we will not be silent," Mayer said.

COURTESY PHOTO / DOROTHY MAMMEN
Around 130 protestors showed up at the Court Square Upper Green in solidarity with the National Day of Protest across the country.

BREAD LOAF MOUNTAIN ZEN COMMUNITY TO RELOCATE IN MIDDLEBURY

By ELLA CALLAHAN
Contributing Writer

COURTESY PHOTO / COLLEEN JISHU BROWN

Breadloaf Mountain Zen Community's current monestary located in Cornwall, Vt.

This March, Middlebury will welcome the Bread Loaf Mountain Zen Community (BLMZC) as they fully consolidate in a new location at 76 Court Street. BLMZC is an organization that distinguishes itself from other Vermont Zen communities based on its mission to practice community-engaged Buddhism.

The BLMZC is currently centered at a monastery in Cornwall, Vt. and at the Middlebury-based outreach center Gather at 48 Merchants Row. The new location will unite the ceremonies, meditations and sittings that currently take place in Cornwall with the community services provided by Gather.

"Our practice is going out into the community and sharing our sense of compassion and hospitality and welcoming people. It's a basic tenet of Bread Loaf Mountain Zen to see other people as yourself and to see yourself as the other," said Colleen Jishu Brown, a co-founder of the group.

The Zen Community's Cornwall location opened in December 2017 as a hub for Zen practice in the Middlebury area. The community was founded by Brown and her long-time friend Joshin Byrnes, a pair who had previously pursued their Zen journeys independently. In the early 2000s, Byrnes lived in Middlebury and served as the executive director of the Vermont Community Foundation. He later undertook formal Zen training at Upaya Zen Center in New Mexico — one of the country's most renowned Zen institutions. Upon returning to Vermont and reconnecting with Brown, Byrnes decided he wanted to teach and form a community based on his Zen practices.

"We wanted to form a community here with him as our lead teacher, and through the generosity of a few people, we were able to buy this building in Cornwall, which became our home for the Bread Loaf Mountain Zen Community," Brown said.

The Cornwall monastery provided Addison County residents an opportunity to become acquainted with the Zen Community's Buddhist practices without having to commute to towns further from home. BLMZC's Buddhism is rooted in the schools known as Soto Zen tradition and White Plum Asanga lineage.

The organization's dedication to community outreach extends specifically to individuals living on the margins, according to Brown. With this mission in mind, BLMZC established a program called Gather, which provides those in need with a place to eat, shower, and access to essential resources out of their Middlebury location.

"Many of the people who come to Gather are people who are struggling with housing insecurity, substance issues, mental health struggles, poverty, or loneliness, and in many contexts, they're known just by their diagnosis," Brown said.

Mark Orten, director of Middlebury College's Scott Center for Spiritual and Religious Life, spoke with The Campus about Gather's impact on the Middlebury community.

"[BLMZC] bought [48 Merchants Row], renovated it and made it a place for anybody who needed to or wanted to, to stop by," Orten said. "There was a washer and dryer so they could wash their clothes. There was a shower so that they could clean up. Volunteers were always there as resources, to help them learn where there were other community services around town for housing, banking or getting money for things."

Over the years, Middlebury students have become involved with Gather, and Orten said he has always recommended it as an opportunity for students to connect with often-overlooked aspects of the community.

"I imagine that there are probably a number of Middlebury College students who are interested in meditation and maybe Buddhism, or how Buddhism and social action intersect, and those are all things that are right up Bread Loaf Mountain's alley," Brown said.

He believes that BLMZC's consolidation this March will make it easier for students on campus to get involved with their programs.

"Seventy-six Court Street will open up to have all of the Bread Loaf Mountain projects, activities, and retreats, all under one roof," Brown said.

BLMZC provides numerous opportunities for students to get involved, whether they are interested in Buddhism or in community service. Students who wish to get involved should visit the Bread Loaf MountainZen Community website and visit Middlebury's Crest Room in McCullough Student Center, where they can participate in community building and spiritual practices.

Tolerance and forbearance in hosting outside speakers

Op-Ed

Sarah Stroup *is a Professor of Political Science and Director of the Conflict Transformation Collaborative.*

In 2017, controversial speaker Charles Murray came to Middlebury a few weeks after the inauguration of President Trump. Our liberal campus was feeling quite raw. Minorities were under scrutiny by a new presidential administration. In that environment, a group brought a speaker to Middlebury to talk about a challenging topic and announced the event with very little notice.

On Thursday, Brianna Wu and Leor Sapir are scheduled to appear on our campus. Anyone can find their essays and talks with a quick Google search. Why then spend resources to bring outside speakers such as these to campus? In theory, outside speaker events could be an invaluable opportunity to have a meaningful dialogue, if we have taken time to consider this critical question: "Under what conditions do our students listen openly and seek understanding?" What good is free speech if nobody is listening?

After the upheaval surrounding Charles Murray's visit, I was asked to sit on a twelve-member committee of faculty, students and staff representing very different viewpoints. Without explicitly saying so, we followed two norms that are necessary for the functioning of democracy: mutual toleration and forbearance. We had to show up with both a willingness to disagree and a recognition that antagonizing other parties in our iterated conversations could end our work together. Forbearance is a recognition that difficult conversations take time — if you start with the most divisive issue without treating the other party with respect, they will just leave.

The Hamilton Forum, the organizer of Thursday's talk, aspires "to contribute to a culture of reasoned, civil discussion across political and intellectual differences." As many of my colleagues know, I have long worked on fostering dialogue across difference. But since 2017, I have been consistently concerned that we are focusing too much on who gets to speak (the mutual toleration) without enough attention to whether anyone is listening (the forbearance).

Our job is to bring new ideas and new information to our students. If our students spend four years here and do not have their prior beliefs challenged, then we aren't doing our job. As democratic practice, education thus requires mutual toleration. But it also requires forbearance. As simply stated by philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah, people don't think well when they feel personally insulted.

This conversation isn't just uncomfortable - it feels unsafe for some members of our community. The new presidential administration issued an executive order on Jan. 20 that seeks to "enforce all sex-protective laws." Timing matters.

Sometimes, the response is that our students are simply incapable of listening openly. That "snowflake" narrative is wrong. It is also dangerous for democracy and for education. Arthur Brooks, former president of the American Enterprise Institute, argues that the most dangerous emotion in a democracy is contempt — a combination of anger and disgust. Hatred, disdain and pity feed political polarization. These emotions also have no place in education, which proceeds from the basic ontological assumption that people can change and grow.

We do not have a lot of conservative voices on our campus. I worry that we are not preparing our students for a polarized America. I worry that feelings of isolation among a political minority are driving a move from frustration to anger to contempt. And I worry about the safety and well-being of trans and LGBQ+ members of our community.

I also think we can do better than we did in 2017.

For trans folks and friends: you have my support. These events are opt-in and I hope you will care for yourself. Maybe attend a different gathering. A similar event from Vergennes several years ago was a model of more speech and joyful solidarity. Not going is also an option.

For the Hamilton Forum and other event hosts: critique is not the equivalent of silencing speech. The 2018 committee suggested that hosts announce talks early and reach out to other groups and departments. Lack of transparency and a short time frame makes it harder for people to engage, not easier.

For Brianna Wu and Leor Sapir: You are prominent people who have given lots of talks, so you likely have thought about the timing and setting. I hope you will speak to those as you engage with this corner of the United States.

For campus conservatives: there are other options on our campus. After the election, our community conversation at the Town Hall Theater had 70 attendees, including many Vermont Republicans. Students in a conflict transformation skills class got a hands-on workshop this fall from a Braver Angels representative addressing Red/Blue stereotypes. We are trying to structure constructive engagements across all sorts of differences, including political ideology.

This is the work of an intellectual and residential community. We are capable of doing it together.

Is it time for an academic reckoning?

Op-Ed

Vyas Nageswaran *is a member of the class of 2026.*

"There are no solutions, only trade-offs." The immortal words of economist Thomas Sowell apply as much to college administration as they do to public policymaking. When it comes to academics, I believe it is high time that Middlebury confronts this reality.

From my very first semester, I noticed a contradiction between the college's mission statement and the academic culture that it promotes. How is it that students are prepared to "lead engaged, consequential, and creative lives" when most of their time is spent trying to complete a virtually endless array of assignments and readings? Does living a life of consequence go hand in hand with academic rigor? In the latter's current form, I think not.

Of course, there is a case to be made for rigor: It forces us to challenge ourselves in ways we might not otherwise elect to and pushes the boundaries of our intellectual limits. However, the pursuit of rigor for the sake of rigor, which I believe is what the academic culture at Middlebury has devolved to, merely breeds burnout and misery.

Further, the contradictions do not end with the mission statement. They appear to be omnipresent. For instance, as a member of the College's Community Council during the 2023–2024 academic year, I was privy to frequent conversations on how student well-being could be improved. We always seemed to invariably circle back to the idea that we needed more: more clubs, more events and more outreach.

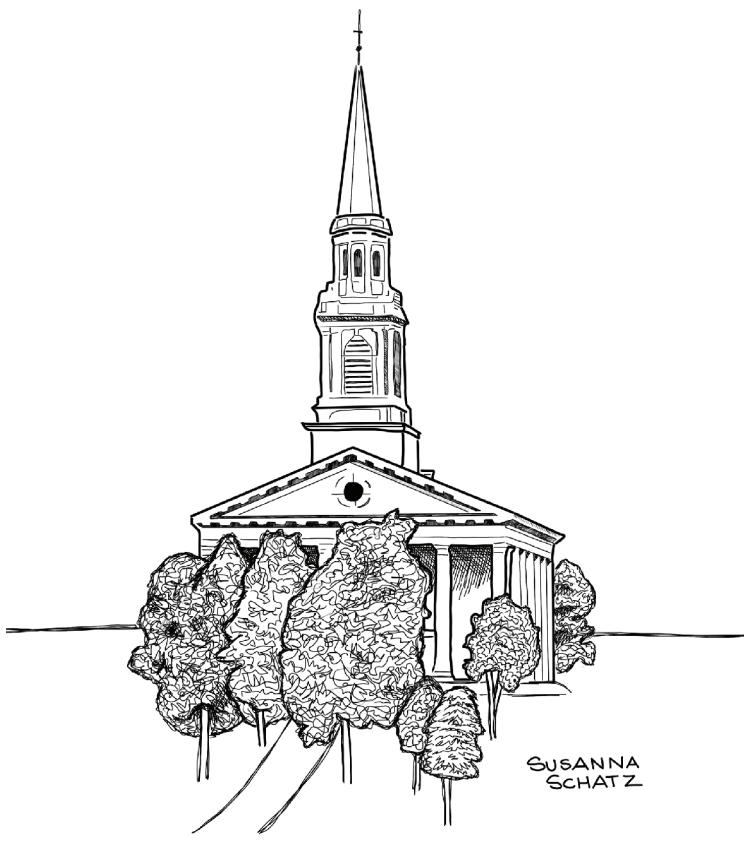
However, there was little recognition of the fact that what would really improve students' well-being is giving them more control of their time, which would follow from having fewer academic obligations — a solution that is antithetical to Middlebury's present brand of academic rigor. Let us be clear: Any conversation on student well-being cannot be meaningful if it eschews the question of their academic workload.

The college's academic policies also make for proverbial headscratchers. Take, for example, the prohibition against invoking Credit/No-Credit (CR/NCR) for academic distribution requirements. If the purpose of having these requirements is to "encourage breadth of learning in our liberal arts curriculum," why stop students from using a grading method that would support them in taking larger steps outside of their academic comfort zones? Is the goal academic exploration or academic perfection? Is the latter even attainable? Clarity and realism are urgently needed.

Another case-in-point example is the fact that when a student decides to retake a class that they previously did not perform well in, the new grade they receive will appear on their transcript along with the older one, but not be used for GPA calculations. In other words, your GPA is a function of how well you perform on the first go. Whatever happened to fostering a growth mindset and rewarding effort? Are these no longer worthy endeavors?

As a counterargument, I can imagine the questions I have raised in this article being met with the following response: "While Middlebury College's academic culture exhibits certain features which one may be inclined to deplore, we must, I think, agree that a certain curtailment of the right to work-life balance is unavoidable, and that the rigors which Middlebury students are being subject to have been vindicated in the sphere of academic achievement." I am taking some creative liberties here, but such a response is not completely removed from reality either. There are many people who would consider the status-quo perfectly justifiable; I would implore them to ask themselves to what end.

To be sure, the issues that I have raised in this op-ed constitute merely one facet of a much more complex endeavor, which is clearly defining our institutional identity. There is a need to go back to the fundamentals and ask ourselves what our values are, what we really care about and how we can bring both of these things to the fore



beyond just the academic sphere. Students, too, need to take personal responsibility for this.

That being said, with academics constituting the dominant part of our college experience, it only makes sense to iron out the inconsistencies here first. The reduction in the graduation credit requirements from 36 to 34, which faculty ratified last semester, is a welcome move to the extent that it gives students more flexibility and creates a more level playing-field. We should capitalize on the momentum generated to implement further changes to make the academic experience at Middlebury engaging, fulfilling and fit for purpose. With a new president due to take over soon, the time is ripe for an academic reckoning. I hope the moment does not escape us.

HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

The Campus accepts submissions of opinions, reflections and letters to the editor from all members of our community, every week. Pieces from students, staff and faculty are all welcomed for consideration.

Email us at campus@middlebury.edu with your submissions!

COMING DOWN THE MOUNTAIN: WHAT SHOULD WINTER CARNIVAL MEAN TO MIDDLEBURY?

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

Their neon ski goggles glint against the snow and their cowboy hats are pulled snug over their beanies. Glitter freezes to their cheeks as they grip their numb fingers around the cans tucked into their jackets. It seems like everybody who knows everybody is at the Snowbowl on the third Saturday of February. There's a DJ playing music from the lodge, too faint to really hear, and it's bitterly cold of course, but none of that really matters because it's the Winter Carnival and we came here to see, be seen and feel like Midd Kids.

If this weekend of festivities can tell us anything, it's that when Middlebury students have enough collective buy-in to gather as a community in the cold, cheer their classmates on and check each other out in snowpants, they know how to have some fun.

At a small, liberal arts college where we rarely gather as a community to celebrate our school, Winter Carnival is a unique opportunity to show some spirit — it's a prime example of students coming together and having fun simply because they decide to.

But it is also worth acknowledging that while it may seem like the entire school attends the ski races at the Snowbowl on Saturday, this is clearly an illusion. With a student body of 2,800, the few hundred that may show up to the main carnival event are far from representative of us all. The races and their splendor could be seen by many students as disproportionately ski-culture centric and therefore alienating, and partying during the day — colloquially known as "dartying" — is certainly not for everyone.

Middlebury's party culture comes in full force to the Snowbowl on Carnival day. Ski patrol have to worry about students behaving unsafely due to intoxication, and it's undoubtedly a challenge for the Snowbowl staff to maintain the students coming in droves. As young adults, we should be able to come together as a community without endangering ourselves or making life more difficult for the people who keep us safe and keep the ski mountain we love up and running.

When Middlebury students think of Winter Carnival, the ski races are at the forefront of our minds, often at the cost of making room in our schedules for the other festive events organized by the Middlebury College Activities Board (MCAB). The ice sculpting on the Proctor Dining hall patio provided some excellent post-dinner discourse, and the ice show at Kenyon Arena filled the stands on Saturday — though mostly with locals, not students.

The Winter Carnival Ball, though not without plentiful funding, is attended sparsely, and mostly by underclassmen who are just figuring their social lives out, while the event is popularly shunned by upperclassmen who may sleep through it in favor of partying more later in the night. While often neglected, the ball and ice show are traditions nearly as storied as the ski races — did you know we used to crown a Winter Carnival Queen?

We believe that the campus is better off when more students feel invested in the many events, clubs and activities that occur across campus daily; a similar energy should infuse our attitude toward non-skiing activities in the Winter Carnival.

There are other events and annual occasions on campus to feel yourself part of a larger school community. Nocturne Arts Festival and the Día de los Muertos celebration, for example, are not centered on drinking and don't feature a demographic of the Middlebury community already heavily represented. It's a testament to our shared ability for creating hype that we can make the Winter Carnival into Coachella in the snow — why not bring that same energy to events throughout the whole academic year?

Let's have fun carving ice sculptures, building huge snowmen, drinking hot chocolate, dancing at the Winter Ball and cheering at the Winter Carnival Ice Show — even skiers clad in their neon may find an event or two worth coming down the mountain for.

SPECS PANTHER: "LOITERING FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROSTITUTION" LAWS AND MODERN LEGISLATION

Op-Ed

Emilia Zenker '26 *is a member of the class of 2026 and a SPECS Peer-Educator.*

Loitering for the purpose of prostitution (LPP) is a violation or misdemeanor in many state governments and municipalities across the U.S.. These laws define this charge as wandering or remaining in public spaces for long periods of time with the intent of selling sex or promoting prostitution. While states take varying approaches, many mandate penalties including hundreds of dollars in fines and imprisonment for six months to a year. Furthermore, in some states, if a suspect is caught loitering within the proximity of a school or a church, the defense can become a class A misdemeanor: on the same level as domestic violence, assault or driving under the influence. LPP is a stop-and-frisk ordinance, which means that a police officer can stop and pat down an individual on the sole basis of "reasonable suspicion." In these cases, it is up to the officer to deem what is considered dangerous or against the morals of public decency. Ultimately, modern LPP laws and their accompanying subjective arrests only serve to disproportionately target and penalize marginalized groups, whether LGBTQIA+, BIPOC or human trafficking victims.

SPECS recognizes the existing systems of oppression that work to criminalize individuals on the basis of their sexuality, gender, race or field of employment. Legislative protection for all individuals and communities is not a privilege but a right, and we must continue pushing policymakers to codify bills that promote sexual health, destigmatize sex and empower vulnerable groups.

LPP ordinances, also known as "walking while trans bills," do not just criminalize sex work, but in many states, they extend to include the practice of sodomy, which originally criminalized anal or oral sex between two male-identifying, consenting adults. LPP codes allow for police to surveil and charge individuals who are suspected of "inducing, enticing, soliciting or procuring another to purchase sexual intercourse or physical intimacies in an act of prostitution or sodomy."

As these laws are ambiguous and solely based on "reasonable suspicion," police officers have the right to stop and search any individual suspected of prostitution. Therefore, this policy continues to be utilized as a method to police and surveil BIPOC communities and target LGBTQIA+ youth, primarily trans women of color. Black and low-income communities within the United States have disproportionately been victims of rampant over-policing and government surveillance due to historic racist policies, residential segregation, redlining, concentrated urban poverty and revenue-based policing.

Along with communities of color, LPP laws and other anti-loitering statutes are used to target unhoused populations and individuals with previous convictions. These codes sustain and nourish the "prison to prison pipeline" which refers to the systemic pattern in which previously convicted individuals are more likely to be reincarcerated than those who have not been. The ongoing systematic terrorization of sex workers, LGBQTIA+ individuals, BIPOC communities and unhoused populations is ongoing and rampant with these biased ordinances that permit racial biases and socioeconomic prejudices to be sanctioned under the guise of law-and-order.

To counteract the discriminatory nature of these laws, states like New York and Vermont are repealing dated statutes and taking measures to enact change at the legislative level. In 2020, Vermont's House Judiciary Committee unanimously advanced H.568 that would have provided protections for sex workers who report crimes. This bill, although never enacted into law, would have prevented police officers and law enforcement agents from charging crime or assault victims for sex work or low-level drug possession. Additionally, on June 7, 2022, Vermont Governor Phil Scott signed into law H.746, which sought to update the Burlington City Charter's language on sex work. The law repealed the city council's ability to "restrain and suppress houses of ill fame and disorderly houses, and to punish common prostitutes and persons consorting therewith." While H.764 does not alter the way prostitution is criminalized under Vermont law, this change in language attempts to dismantle the stigma around prostitution and signify the difference between consensual sex work and human trafficking. In fact, just a few weeks ago, S.54 was introduced in the Senate, which seeks to decriminalize voluntary sex work while maintaining penalties for human trafficking or coercion.

SPECS Panther is a mascot for SPECS (sex positive education for college students) and serves the Middlebury community. As a part of Health & Wellness Education, SPECS Panther seeks to educate and spark independent dialogue, not be the end-all be-all resource on campus. We encourage Midd Kids to break down the walls of silence by engaging in sex-positive conversation — wherever, with whomever, and about whatever is most comfortable, easy and safe for you. Our editions will be fun and educational!

In New York, former New York Governor Andrew Cuomo signed into law Senate Bill S1315, which repeals all LPP laws. Individuals in New York can no longer be subject to stop-and-frisk ordinances or biased arrests for "loitering" in public spaces. Since the LPP laws were first codified in New York in 1976, the statute was used to predominantly prosecute trans women of color for selling sex or even engaging in actions such as waving, standing at a bus stop, smoking or wearing a skirt. In 2018 alone, 91% of people arrested under the statute were Black and Latine, and 80% identified as women.

Various nonprofit organizations like the Human Rights Campaign, Decriminalize Sex Work and Amnesty International are currently working to galvanize collective action and propose bills that would eradicate archaic anti-sex and prostitution laws, dismantling historically racist and transphobic policies that criminalize individuals simply for existing in public spaces. The fight to protect trans women, people of color and sex workers from our own legal system is an ongoing battle; however, Vermont and New York are leading the charge for progressive legislation that ensures the protection of all communities. No matter the political climate, policymakers both in and outside of Vermont are working to update outdated legislation and introduce new bills that safeguard victims of human trafficking and sex workers alike.

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The Middlebury Campus

WINTER CARNIVAL ICE SHOW DAZZLES SPECTATORS, HONORS FIGURE SKATER VICTIMS OF PLANE CRASH

Continued from Page 1

of Middlebury's figure skating competition team and of the local Middlebury Figure Skating Club came together to skate to "I Feel Like Dancing" in their red Winter Carnival Ice Show sweatshirts.

This opener was followed by 21 performances, whose brilliance and variation kept the audience's eyes glued to the ice for an hour and a half. Some members of Middlebury's figure skating competition team — Jeannie Paguaga '28, Kate McDonald '27.5, Esteban Catono-Molina '27, Maya Henning '25 and co-president Ting Cui '25.5 — showed off solos, and additional student skater Josie Cochran '25 glided into a solo as well. Henning and Catono-Molina staged an especially memorable duet, decked out in matching red and black costumes. McDonald's hot pink, rhinestoned dress was also particularly eye-catching as she jumped and glided around the rink.

Skaters from the Middlebury Figure Skating Club as young as five years old — some sporting protective helmets and elbow pads to accent their tutus — held hands and roamed the ice for charming group numbers, and three high school seniors skated together to commemorate their upcoming graduation.

Most breathtaking was the duet choreographed and performed by Cui and guest skater from the University of Delaware Figure Skating Club Emmanuel Savary as a tribute to the 28 members of the figure skating community and their family members that passed away in the tragic plane crash of American Airlines Flight 5342 only a few weeks ago. The skaters and their families were on the plane to travel home from the National Development Camp held in Wichita, Kan. directly after the 2025 Prevagen U.S. Figure Skating Championships. Cui and Savary had both competed in the national competition as Team U.S.A figure skaters and already headed for home when they heard of the tragedy.

The news of the deadly crash shook the nation and deeply affected figure skaters in particular, who comprise a small group of athletes compared to other national sports. A loss like this forms a deep hole in the heart of an intimate community, according to Cui.

The show's announcer, Chris George, read out the names of the 14 figure skater casualties and held a moment of mournful silence before Cui and Savary took to the ice. Skating to "Saturn" by Sleeping at Last, the pair moved beautifully to the flow of the music.

"We both kind of just knew that we wanted to take a moment to honor all 28 skaters and coaches and families, members of U.S figure skating that were on board the flight and pay a tribute to them and in a way that we know we can — in doing what we love and doing what they loved," Cui said.

Cui and Savary could not see each other in-person to rehearse the number until 12 hours before the first show on Saturday, but were able to make the piece work by adapting it from a duet they'd performed together in a previous show.

"We kind of readapted it and re-choreographed it to make it feel a little bit more intimate," Cui said.

Participants in the J-Term figure skating workshop also skated in a charming group number to "I Want to Hold Your Hand" by The Beatles after having been coached on their skating skills for only a total of eight hours by the figure skating team throughout J-Term. They showed off their novice swizzles, spins and lunges with notable confidence.

Also particularly impressive in the post-intermission half of the show were Cui and Savary's solos. Cui skated to the bluesy "Black Magic Woman" by Santana in a one-strap black dress with a matching wristband piece, earning ample applause from the audience from her triple salchow jumps. Savary prompted wows in his performance to "Purple Rain" by Prince with his seemingly never-ending whirlwind spins.

STEVE JAMES / THE ADDISON INDEPENDENT

Maya Henning '25 and Esteban Catono-Molina '27 skating their duet on Sunday.

How these skaters do not end up incredibly dizzy was a mystery to all.

The show reached its conclusion with the figure skating team appearing in backwards baseball caps and baggy clothing to perform a group number to "Tearin' Up My Heart" by NSYNC choreographed by club co-president Lizzie Sherman '26. The team was joined in upholding this boy-band inspired tradition by Savary, their advisor HaQuyen Pham on Saturday and by Cochran on Sunday.

Butch Atkins has managed the ice rink and driven the zamboni for 45 years, and has helped prepare the ice for the show since he started the job. He noted how much work show directors Anna Harrington and MariAnn Osborne put into tying the show together, and what it's like to watch the performances year in and out.

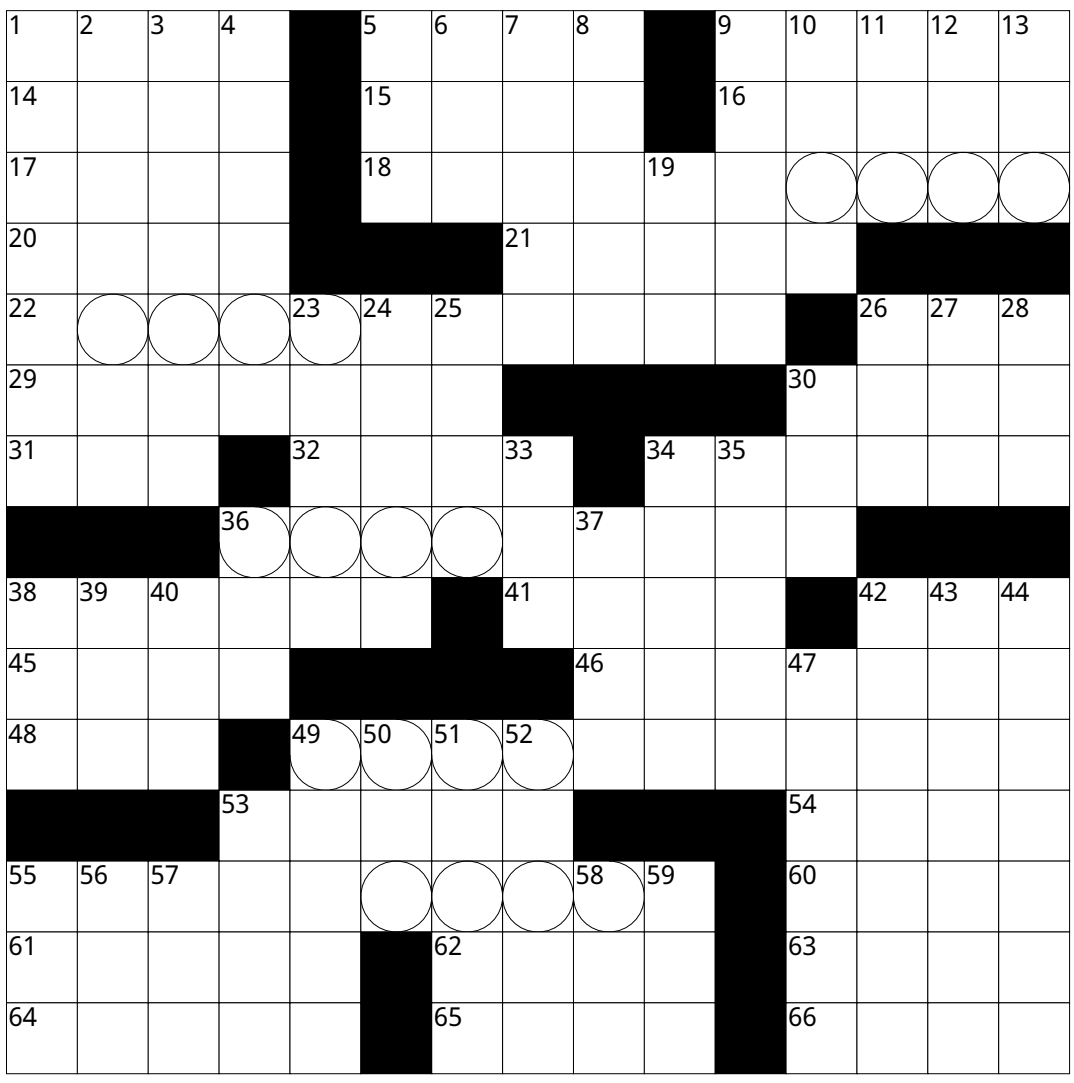
"We have a lot of kids from the town that you see start out when they're little kids and see how they've progressed, and it's just awesome, because they come back every year," Atkins said.

Watching the smallest children glide on and off the ice between the college skaters' advanced leaps and turns is a reminder of the ice show's storied tradition, and how far it has yet to lunge in years to come.

Editor's Note: Ting Cui '25.5 is the Senior Sports Editor for The Campus. She had no involvement in editing this story.

Signed, Sealed, Delivered

Egan Turner



ACROSS

1 Home, colloquially
5 Aztecs' sch.
9 "The Jungle" author Sinclair
14 Thinker Descartes
15 Cartography creations
16 /
17 Cruciverbalist's favorite actress Rae
18 Tool typically used post-blizzard
20 Victor Wembanyama or Chris Paul
21 Focused view of 15-Across
22 Armand Duplantis was one that featured at the 2024 Olympics
26 Cut 49-Down
29 Appetizer followers
30 "Scars to Your Beautiful" singer Alessia
31 Aves. or hwys.
32 Repeated bit in music
34 Toothless, for instance
36 Middlebury's ___ Dance Crew
38 Social environment
41 Weather agcy.
42 Airport code for a trip to Giza
45 Baseless?
46 Hormone produced by a pancreas
48 Barely make
49 Notes for a Valentine, and what can be found in 18-Across, 22-Across, 36-Across, and 55-Across
53 One of 150 in Venice
54 When doubled, a Hawaiian fish
55 Jacob Black and Remus Lupin
60 Bills featuring Washington
61 Snack for a squirrel
62 Sleeveless outerlayer
63 Private sch. standardized test
64 Moxie, Starry, and Fresca
65 Award in sport
66 Danson, Mosby, and Lasso

DOWN

1 More cold outside
2 Give an answer
3 35-Down lines
4 Ring ___
5 Texting format, for short
6 "The Da Vinci Code" author Brown
7 Go bad
8 4-time World Cup champs, for short
9 Super Bowl LVIII halftime show headliner
10 Plan or story
11 What Omega Alpha became at Midd.
12 Suffix for carbohydrates
13 Org. with Kings and Panthers
19 BiHall to McCullough dir.
23 Enthusiasm or pep
24 Vowels, alphabetically
25 NFL competitor until 2023
26 MiddGeo, for example
27 Gold, in Guadalajara
28 Obi-___ Kenobi
30 Often confused with may
33 A ball?
34 "Unfaithful" actress Lane
35 Ridiculing banquet
36 Holiday occurring in late March this year
37 Work hard
38 Astronaut Jemison
39 Sudden feeling of disgust towards someone
40 "Middlebury has 4 dining halls", for instance
42 Disinfect
43 Piece of taffy candy
44 Stands one's ground
47 Greatest importance
49 Well-kept grass areas
50 Artist Yoko
51 Heart part
52 Dobby and Legolas
53 "Arrested Development"'s Michael
55 Thought, according to 14-Across?
56 Prefix for tourism and sphere
57 Fishing tool
58 Clairvoyance, briefly
59 Swine spot

RAINA MATAR'S "SHE" EXPLORES WOMEN'S RESILIENCE IN NEW PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT

RANIA MATAR / COURTESY OF MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

Photographs in the SHE exhibit in Mahaney Arts Center.

By MAYA ALEXANDER
Opinions Editor

On Thursday Feb. 13, staff, students and faculty gathered in Mahaney Arts Center (MAC) to celebrate the opening of Rania Matar's photography exhibition, SHE. Her work will run until April 20, and tells the stories of young women through portraits taken across Lebanon, France, Palestine, Egypt and the U.S.

The exhibition includes 51 large-scale color photographs from SHE, which depict women in their 20s from a wide range of vantage points: through car windows, in abandoned buildings, snow-strewn fields, or floating in the Mediterranean Sea. By working with women in both the U.S and the Middle East, Matar — a Lebanese-born American herself — highlights a shared experience across borders and cultures. Through this, she has established ongoing relationships with many of her subjects, creating intimate portraits that evolve organically.

"I am interested in young women as they enter adulthood today, and in portraying not only their individuality, but also how they confront the environment they find themselves in," Matar wrote in the artist statement on her website.

The exhibition was curated by Josephine Rodgers, curator of collections and director of engagement at the Middlebury College Museum of Art. She worked alongside Assistant Professor Sarah Rogers, student curators, as well as students in the "Orientalism and the Visual Arts and Middle East Photography" course in the fall, who drafted the labels for the exhibition.

While Matar photographs a diverse array of people and landscapes, two recurring themes emerge within five minutes of strolling through the exhibition: the young girls' hair and its relationship to their respective surroundings, and how the women interact with water. For instance, Matar depicts Cierra, whose bright pink hair blends into the flowers around her — she becomes part of the environment. This photo was taken in a field in North Carolina, but we can also see an example captured in an entirely different context: Joelle, who is pictured in Beirut, Lebanon, is framed by what appears to be a demolished window. Her braids are entangled in the destruction.

Other subjects are depicted in bodies of water, providing the viewer with moments of tranquility. While there is a sense of calmness in these images, there appears to be a discomfort or pain in some of the subject's faces, even those who are floating with their eyes shut: as one of the statements on the wall discussed, we must not forget the violence and hardships these women have faced. The photos hold "memories of destruction and experiences of displacement," as one of the student statement's read.

Depicting this violence and resilience, the exhibition also highlights the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War, which is this coming April. Thanks to Matar's work, the Middlebury community has a chance to learn about this history through incredible imagery.

"My goal is to create programming that inspires Middlebury students and promotes the museum as a space to make connections to their lived experiences," Rodgers wrote.

A&C IT FOR YOURSELF: SPRING ARTS PREVIEW

COURTESY PHOTOS / MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

There are many fun events and performances including British painist Steve Osborne and Westt African Dance and Drum Class this spring.

By ELLIE TRINKLE
Senior Arts & Culture Editor

As the snow piles up on campus and winter chills threaten the hopes of an early spring, one of the best ways to stay warm (and entertained) is to attend a local art event. This semester's offerings range from paintings to theatre, each bringing their unique energy to the Middlebury community. These, of course, are only a handful of some of the exciting events, but the rest can be found listed in the Middlebury Art Events Calendar. Without further ado, here are some upcoming art events to brighten the cold, stressful days of spring semester.

In its 105th season, the Middlebury Performing Arts Series will continue to grace the community with its presence during spring semester, featuring musical performances whose genres range from classical to baroque to jazz. On March 7, Jordanian-Palestinian pianist Iyad Sughayer will captivate audiences with his raw, classical style. On March 28, the Isidore String Quartet will make their Middlebury debut with music that blends contemporary and classical forms.

British pianist Steven Osborne will follow on April 4 to dazzle audiences with infusions of jazz and classical music. To close out the season on April 27, violinist Alina Ibragimova and pianist Cédric Tiberghien will reimagine Beethoven's sonatas.

Music performances are not the only ones taking place this semester. Running from April 3–5, the Theatre Department will be putting on Gina Femia's "The Virtuous Fall of the Girls from Our Lady of Sorrows", which will be directed by Visiting Assistant Professor of Theatre Sheila Bandyopadhyay. The play follows a group of Brooklyn Catholic school girls as they lead a revolution to protest the authoritative environment around them.

The department will also put on Griselda Gambaro's "The Walls" from May 1–3. Directed by Claudio Medeiros, this play follows a young man who is detained in a room, prompting him to question the world around him.

Aside from performances, there are also plenty of interactive art events to attend. Maybe try a West African Dance and Drum Class on Mondays in Wilson Hall, bring out that instrument you wish you could play more in Friday Jazz Workshops, or dance your heart out at the Middlebury College Radio (WRMC) Rave on March 28 featuring Arab/SWANA DJ collective Laylit.

There are plenty of other opportunities to be discovered, especially through the various campus organizations. Creating Art Together hosts workshops for all art levels for students to detox from their busy academic schedules by socializing and creating art. The Ceramics Club always has opportunities to make your next cereal bowl, or maybe you'll learn how to shape metal into rings and necklaces with the Middlebury Jewelry Club. Whether it's visual or performing arts, there are plenty of student organizations to get involved in.

For those who prefer looking at art rather than create it, the Johnson Exhibition Gallery has a new exhibit every month. Currently on view is "Textile Conversation," which features both historical clothing displays and interactive experiences that teach about the history and art behind the textile.

The Middlebury College Museum of Art also offers exciting exhibitions. Currently, MuseumLAB: Teaching with the Collection is running until April 20. and focuses on interdisciplinary teaching. Professors select pieces from the museum's collection and use it to facilitate larger conversations in their classes. The museum also invites visitors to come and contemplate how art can be a vital learning tool that intersects across multiple disciplines.

Of course, this is only a small sample of all of the awesome art events and performances going on this spring. There are plenty of performances to see, club meetings to attend and museum exhibitions to explore this semester to help you stay warm. Plus, if you ever find yourself leaving an event with a craving to write about it, you know where to find us...

Shoegazing in Vermont: Slowdive and Quannic at Higher Ground

By IDANESI OJIOR
Staff Photographer

In November of last year, Burlington music venue Higher Ground released tickets for a concert this January by one of the biggest names in the shoegaze genre — Slowdive. Never have I purchased a ticket for a concert so fast. As the band responsible for introducing me to the legendary world of shoegaze and dream pop my junior year of high school, there was no way I was going to miss this concert.

As an extended tour for their fifth studio album released on Sept. 1, 2023 (and second album following their 2017 reunion after a 22-year hiatus) this was Slowdive's fourth return to North America for the "Everything Is Alive" tour.

Entering Higher Ground, a local Burlington venue that has been attracting bands and artists on worldwide tours in recent years, a mass of college-aged kids hailing from all corners of Vermont in black uniform, made personal by the addition of unique hairstyles, jewelry and other staple pieces.

At about 8 p.m., the lights dimmed and the opening act came on stage: The artist Quannnic, who is considered a major pioneer in reimagining the modern digital sound of shoegaze. Their hit song, "life imitates life" self-released in 2022, blew up across TikTok in early 2023, inspiring a new wave of shoegaze listeners and performers whilst restoring the genre's renowned mixture of "fuzziness and detail."

Gone are the days of collecting and thrifting guitar pedals and other expensive analog equipment. With just an audio mixer (or even a laptop with GarageBand) and a direct input to your instrument of choice, anyone can achieve the staple shoegaze sound through the use of digital effects. Quannnic, among other artists, has crafted a blueprint, making the genre more accessible for those looking to experiment with a unique sound.

Quannnic's performance featured several grunge qualities, from the mediocre lighting of the hall to the stage presence of the band. It felt like I was watching a show from outside someone's mom's garage, catching myself banging my head trying to match the drummer's energy along with the rest of the crowd and touring band. It was clear that not many in the crowd were familiar with Quannnic's wider discography, but that didn't stop people from moving and grooving.

Despite the recent rough track record concert-goers have towards opening acts post Covid-19, the crowd etiquette was at a 10 and everyone's ears were peeled, vibing along to Quannnic's post-indie sound. As the booming opener set came to a close, the touring bassist chucked something into the crowd. Landing directly in front of me, I saw that it was a guitar pick. A bloody guitar pick. No setlist was needed — this was my trophy for the night.

The crowd went wild as Slowdive entered stage right. With the four albums they've released over the course of 30 years at two distinctly different points in time — the mid-90s and late-2010s — all respective generations were there to listen to a dream-like concert full of opportunities to express any emotions held within.

The band led with the eight-minute ambient theme of "Avalyn II"; a golden song to tune, test and set the acoustics for the instruments and venue. Lead singer Rachel Goswell was enamored by the excitement of the crowd, reciprocating the joy as she stood and smiled from the stage set with her piano, a reader's lamp and a songbook. As Avalyn II ended, the concert began in earnest.

Of the setlist, not an album was left out, from the more electronic and synth sounds of their newest songs to their earliest works featuring the classic shoegaze sound defined by wistful, hazy, and distorted textures. Being in the middle and relatively close to the barricade, all I could hear was a cosmic wall of sound coming from the line array speakers and the acoustics coming directly from the main stage. A microphone was placed inside the kick drum, a sensation so powerful I could feel it thumping in my throat.

IDANESI OJIOR / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
Slowdive recently performed in Burlington as part of their fourth North American tour, "Everything Is Alive."

Each song had its own visuals that vaguely related to its themes; lights made it seem as if we were under a veil of fog, or at times, in a firefight. The visual for "Sugar for the Pill" was quite literally capsules being filled with sugar — probably the only part of the set that I couldn't help but laugh at. The band closed with their most renowned piece of work "When the Sun Hits," accompanied with strobe and ambient lighting so strong that if you told me the sun was in the room with us, I would believe you.

As Slowdive left the stage, the crowd started to chant and cry, begging for an encore. Their return to stage was my chance to request a song from the band. On my phone I typed out a big wall of text saying "don't know why?", the title to one of my favorite songs. Goswell looked directly at me and said "Oh sorry, we can't do that one." At that moment my heart was shattered. Little did I know that my heart would be repaired in minutes when I heard the first notes of another favorite of mine. "40 Days" came on, and making clear eye contact with the lead singer, I sang the song word for word.

Whether discovered in forums, introduced to by friends, found in a playlist or heard out in public at some point, in all these concertgoers' time, Slowdive was the voice for them. With their bittersweet lyrics full of a range of experiences the average teenager relates to or longs for, combined with a dreamy soundscape, it's simply music you can cry, sleep, dance or just dissolve to — they're a band you can fall headfirst into.

"DRESS DETECTIVES": THE CONSERVATIONAL WORK OF AN ANTIQUE CLOTHING COURSE

By CHRISTY LIANG
Contributing Writer

Antique clothing was dusted off and brought back to life this past J-Term in the "Historic Clothing Practicum," co-taught by visiting Assistant Professor of Theatre Summer Lee Jack and Associate Professor of Costume Design at Penn State University Charlene Gross. The class focused on accessioning the college's existing antique clothing collection, learning about textile degradation and preservation and curating a themed exhibition in Johnson Memorial Building.

Students separated into five stations: accessioning, which focused on cataloguing garments in a database; vacuuming, to keep dust and other contaminants off historic pieces; spot treatment, to address mold after bringing frozen garments to room temperature; and data information, which required students to research and practice "slow seeing" to garner extensive information on garments; and reference photography, where students took 360° views of the garments in front of a neutral grey drop.

Jack and Gross defined the idea of "close looking and slow seeing" by explaining how the longer and more closely you look at a historical garment, the more information you can discover from it. A stain, certain sleeve cut, faded label or the way the collar has shattered over the decades can reveal when and how the piece was made, which fabric it was made from and how it has disintegrated over time.

Middlebury's antique clothing collection is comprised of over 400 historical garments. Some of the items were costume pieces used solely for plays, and costume design for historical plays at Middlebury often draws inspiration from the collection. Most of the pieces, however, were everyday clothing items worn by past Vermont inhabitants, the oldest of which is estimated to date from the early 19th century.

Historical textiles differ from other heritage objects in their casual everyday use, according to work by students in the class.

"Historical textiles... are vulnerable to damage not only due to their past history or composition, but also because they are familiar objects. As a result, historical textiles might have been handled more casually than other heritage objects," a student in the class' poster read.

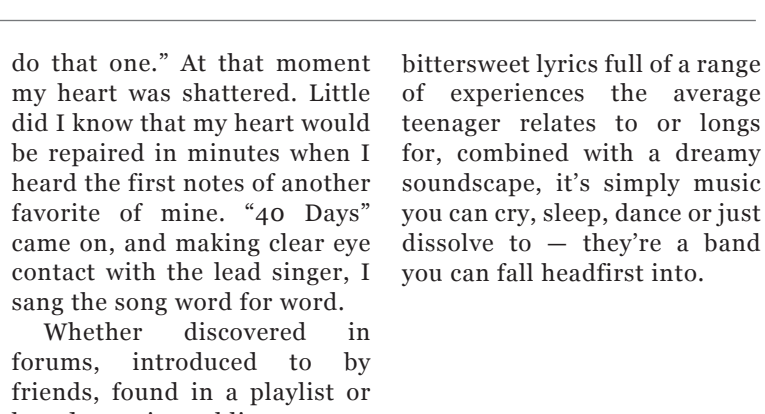
However, it's exactly due to the frequent handling of these items that we get to witness intimate marks left by people from the past.

This intimacy creates the tantalizing prospect of cross-temporal empathy, where we look at a piece of historical clothing in the present day and conjure a sense of the lives of those who once wore it.

"What people wore says so much about what they were like," Gross said.

The work behind the course was not as concerned about restoration as it was about conservation, balancing the two major forces behind managing antique clothing. Oftentimes, time and resources had to go either into one or the other. It is refreshingly unconventional to explore the process of decay and disintegration when it is usually only the most well-preserved and glamorous items that are showcased.

The work of "dress detectives," a term Lee coined, provides a deeper understanding into textile work and how it intersects with history and science. In understanding the process and cause of decay, entomology — the study of insects — plays an important role in differentiating between moth holes and carpet beetles. When trying to date a clothing item, historical knowledge plays a crucial part.



ELLIE TRINKLE / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
Three pieces of antique clothing from the college's collection on display in Johnson Exhibition Gallery.

The class illustrated the multifaceted forces behind textile conservation and the creative potential of antique clothing. It is truly a testament to the fun-filled, hands-on and interdisciplinary focus of the J-Term experience. To learn more about the power behind textile work and antique clothing, visit Johnson Exhibition Gallery's "Textile Conversations," where students' J-Term work is on display for the next month.

PANTHERS TAKE ON WILLIAMS DURING SENIOR DAY AND "SKATE FOR SARCOMA" HOME GAMES

By WERONIKA WOZNY
Contributing Writer

The men's and women's hockey teams both had poignant and celebratory weekends. From celebrating the female senior players during Friday's game, to spreading awareness about sarcoma cancer on Saturday, the games meant more than just 60 minutes spent on ice fighting for the puck.

During the Winter Carnival, the Panthers played the Williams College Ephs (5–8–1 Women's and 5–9–2 Men's) in back-to-back games, scoring 10 goals across four different events. Friday's home game marked Senior Day for the women's team, which ended with a dominant 7–0 victory. On Saturday, the men's team returned home and played in honor of Catherine Malatesta with a "Skate for Sarcoma." The event not only boosted the Panthers' position with a 2–0 win but also spread awareness about sarcoma cancer through the Catherine J. Malatesta Foundation.

As always, Senior Day was incredibly emotional for the graduating Panthers, and the whole community came together to appreciate and celebrate the 10 seniors on the team: Jordan Hower, Sabrina Kim, Cat Appleyard, Raia Schluter, Sophia Merageas, Elinor Keehn, Kylie Quinlan, Cece Ziegler, Selia Coady and Molly MacQueen — all invaluable assets to the women's team.

After a beautiful celebration of the seniors, it was time for the first face-off of the game. Right from the moment the puck touched the ice, the Panthers were dominating. The first goal came at 9:31 from Jordan Hower '25, after assists from Britt Nawrocki '26 and Cece Ziegler '25. That was just the beginning, as Middlebury ended the first period with two additional goals scored by Olivia McManus '27 and Nawrocki.

The next two periods offered the audience of Kenyon Arena continuous action up until the last minute, culminating in a final goal with just 45 seconds left in the third period. The goal was a result of yet another well-executed maneuver by Nawrocki, after an assist from Liv Fernandez '27, sealing the game with a 7–0 score.

The teams met again the next day, this time at Williams. Although the outcome of the rematch was not ideal with a 1–4 loss, captains Sophia Merageas '25 and Cat Appleyard '25 emphasized that with the level of hockey seen in the NESCAC conference, anything is possible, and that the best thing the team can do is take away lessons from the game to move forward and focus on the next game.

Reflecting on the weekend, senior Sabrina Kim '25 commented that it was "such a great Senior Day win to look back on, especially with a 7-0 score that was way bigger than our previous wins."

Appleyard also pointed out that she wants this team to be remembered as one "who was really resilient and always pushed through the end, even when things were not going our way."

Overall, the three seniors pointed out the importance of playing for the "M" and always showing up for each other, and Appleyard emphasized "leav[ing] the jersey better than you found it."

Where Friday's Senior Day offered an opportunity for celebration of legacy, Saturday's "Skate for Sarcoma" game brought the community together in Kenyon Arena more than any strategies, scores or titles ever could.

Before their home game, the men's team faced the Ephs back in Williamstown, Mass. After three non-scoring periods and overtime, the Panthers fell 2–1 in a shootout. This unsatisfactory turn of events fueled Middlebury's motivation, especially given the tight NESCAC standings.

However, as emphasized by Coach Ceglarski and Jack Silverman '28, this game far transcended any scores or standings.

COURTESY PHOTO / WILL COSTELLO

Women's hockey celebrates a goal against Williams College.

"Being able to have that night for the Malatesta family and his passed-away sister was very special and emotional, so the win was huge on a couple different fronts," Jin Lee '25 said.

The "Skate for Sarcoma" event was coordinated by Drew Malatesta '25, Jake Oblak '25 and Jackson Morehouse '27 in partnership with the Catherine J. Malatesta Foundation. From an emotional puck-drop ceremony to special jerseys worn by the Middlebury players and yellow towels that adorned the Kenyon seats, both teams knew that they were playing for a noble cause.

As Malatesta emphasized, the key to Saturday night was to "educate people about sarcoma, introduce them to the Catherine J. Malatesta Foundation, and honor Catherine's amazing life and her legacy."

Middlebury started off strong, with the first goal scored with less than 1:30 remaining in the first period by Wyatt Pastor '25, assisted by Lee '25 and Silverman. The Panther's dominance extended into the second period as Reece Brednich, assisted by Malatesta '25 and John Burdett '26, scored despite the disadvantage of playing four against five players following a penalty administered on Christian Wood '25.

The game ended with a score of 2–0 for the Panthers. However it was not without a struggle — especially for goalie Andre Heinze '27, who made 45 saves, earning him recognition as an "Outstanding Player" at the end of the event.

As emphasized by captain Lee, this result is a testament to the skill that exists within the team, that will hopefully guide them as they enter the final push of the season.

Both Lee and Malatesta also pointed out that the win was especially rewarding, not only because it boosted the team's standings in the conference, bringing them one step closer to play-offs, but also because it contributed to the fundraising and educational efforts of the Malatesta foundation.

Remembering Luke Hotte, Middlebury's beloved throws coach

Continued from Page 1

Hotte was deeply woven into the fabric of the local community. A regular at Rosie's Restaurant and a member of the American Legion, he was a consistent figure in Middlebury life for decades.

Hotte's connection to throwing excellence began early. As a student at Middlebury Union High School, he set the Vermont state record in the shot put, a mark that would stand for many years. He went on to a collegiate career at Northeast Missouri University (now Truman State) where he became the 1969 Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association (MIAA) shot put champion, followed by a runner-up finish in 1970.

Hotte's coaching journey at Middlebury College began modestly in 1985 when then-Head Coach Gail Smith learned of him as a talented local thrower who had competed at Northeast Missouri. While working a day job full-time as a field representative for Agri-Mark dairy cooperative, where he inspected milk quality at farms across Vermont and northern New York, Hotte found his true calling in coaching.

"He was always up near the Canadian border, and he was always racing back to get to our 4:30 practice," Beatty said.

For years, Hotte's only compensation was free passes to the Snowbowl and Ralph Myhre Golf Course before being hired officially in 1994 — a testament to the purity in his love for coaching.

His technical expertise was unmatched.

"I consider him the best throws coach in this part of the country," Beatty said. "Other throws coaches would come and ask him for advice. He could tell you how the Russians are training their athletes, how the Germans are training, how the Canadians are training in each throwing event."

Hotte helped produce six individual NCAA Champions and 27 NESCAC champions across men's and women's throwing events in his time at Middlebury.

While Hotte's coaching statistics speak volumes — with numerous All-Americans and records under his guidance — his greatest impact was in the human connections he forged. Hotte's coaching philosophy emphasized hard work, patience and personal growth. Throwing events are notoriously demanding, requiring discipline and repetition to achieve perfect form.

The intensity of training was often punctuated by moments of levity through Hotte's storytelling. Athletes recall how impromptu breaks became cherished moments where Hotte would share tales from his rich life, transforming grueling practice sessions into opportunities for connection and camaraderie.

"Practices were always something I looked forward to every day," Maxwell said. "He was probably one of the best coaches I've ever had in my life... I owe a lot in terms of the thrower that I became because of him, and also the man I am today is a huge part because of him."

Twice each year, Hotte hosted barbecues for the team at his Bridport home. Though he never had children of his own, he found joy in filling his house with the laughter and voices of his athletes. According to Beatty, Hotte would present his throwers with "bricks" of Cabot cheese each Christmas attained through his connection to Vermont's dairy industry.

"He was just a wonderful, good person who loved Middlebury College and loved our track and field program and loved his throwers," Beatty said.

Even as he dealt with significant health issues in recent years, and was confined to a wheelchair in 2023, Hotte's dedication was unwavering as he continued coaching through the fall of 2023 and into early 2024. "Until it was literally impossible for him to come, Luke was always there for us. I think that's a testament to how much he cared about the sport and his athletes," Dan Urchuk '25 wrote.

While Hotte's passing leaves an immense void, his legacy continues through Jake Rigoli, a two-time All-American in the weight throw himself, who was hired last year as the new throwing coach and worked under Hotte. "We're really lucky to have gone from a coach like Luke to Jake," Urchuk wrote. "Losing such a great coach would have been a major disruption in almost any other scenario, but we haven't lost a step under Jake's leadership."

COURTESY PHOTOS / IN MEMORIAM: LUKE HOTTE

Under Rigoli's guidance, Middlebury's throwing program remains among the strongest in the NESCAC, a tribute to the foundation Hotte built and Rigoli's ability to carry it forward.

Hotte's legacy lives on not just in the record books or championship banners, but in the countless lives he touched with his quiet confidence, endless support and ability to help others discover their full potential.

"Luke was an institution. He was Middlebury Throws," Urchuk wrote. "We are all so grateful for the work he put into making our event group what it is today. We owe everything to Luke and hope to embody his hard work and dedication the rest of the season."

MIDDLEBURY WOMEN'S SWIMMING AND DIVING PLACES FIFTH AT NESCAC CHAMPIONSHIP

By BROOKE FRIBERG
Sports Editor

Last weekend, Middlebury women's swimming and diving headed to Waterville, Maine to compete in the highly-anticipated 2025 NESCAC Championship. Hosted by Colby College, the four-day weekend kicked off on Thursday, Feb. 13 with the 800 Freestyle Relay, and wrapped up on Sunday, Feb. 16 with the 400 Freestyle Relay.

Historically, the Panthers have finished third on four occasions, demonstrating their consistent strength and determination in the NESCAC conference. This year, #23 Middlebury, with a 3–3 record in the regular season, came ready to fight as they faced top-ranked opponents such as Williams College, Amherst College, Colby College and Tufts University. Ultimately, the Panthers placed fifth out of 11 teams, with a total of 996 points — no small feat considering the level of competition seen at the NESCAC Championship.

Right out of the gate on Thursday, Middlebury's relay "A" team placed fourth among 22 relay teams, beating the Panthers' record time and qualifying them for an NCAA 'B' cut. The relay "B" team also achieved an NCAA 'B' cut time, making it clear to all that the Panthers came fiercely ready to race.

"I think the meet couldn't have started off on a better note with our 800 free relay," Sasha Casey '27 wrote. "We've been working so hard this season, both in and out of the pool — and seeing it pay off with 2 incredible swims on night one was so rewarding, and carried us into the rest of the meet with high spirits and lots of excitement."

Despite the high stakes of the weekend, the Panthers upheld their team values and maintained a supportive atmosphere for one another. Head Coach Bob Rueppel described the team's energy heading into the weekend as outstanding.

"[We were] very confident, but knowing we have to have fun to put us in a spot to attain what we can be," Rueppel wrote.

This confidence proved successful, as several Panthers achieved standout finishes. Maddy Reid '25 placed second in the 50 Backstroke with an impressive time of 26.20, while Chloe Katz '25 showed sheer endurance in the 1000 Freestyle, achieving third place with 10:08.46. Anna McGrew '28 came in at second place for the 100 Freestyle with 50.89.

For seniors Reid and Katz, these events will surely contribute to a memorable finish to their Middlebury swimming careers. Their leadership will be greatly missed, there's no doubt that their legacy will continue to impact the team in future seasons.

"The senior women on this team are so special. They fostered one of the most genuine and supportive communities I've ever been a part of, and I am forever grateful to them for making this women's team what it is. We will miss every one of them," Casey wrote.

Across the several-day meet, the Panthers' outstanding performance and unwavering positivity showcased their dedication and commitment to each other and to their sport, and will undoubtedly set them up for success beyond the NESCAC conference weekend.

"Our energy on deck is always unmatched, and the collective energy is contagious. Our personal outcomes are never that important because we always find excitement and fulfillment in watching our teammates do well and celebrating our accomplishments as a team. We work so hard all season that these meets are always so rewarding and are an amazing way to celebrate," Emma Hall '26 wrote.

While the Panthers may have not secured a conference title this year, they have much to be proud of and will continue to celebrate their progress each step of the way. Looking forward, we can expect to see Middlebury Women's Swimming and Diving build on their current success and values, using the 2025 NESCAC championship weekend as one integral step in their overall journey as a team.

"They have learned to find a place where success and failure does not matter... the journey does," Rueppel wrote.

TRAIGH DEMASI /COLBY ATHLETICS

Swim and Dive Seniors pose for a photo at the NESCAC Championship

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